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WEDNESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

◆ General debate continues at Amendment Conference to Treaty Banning Nuclear Weapon Tests in Atmosphere, Outer Space and under Water.

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The relationship between nuclear testing and the qualitative promotion of the nuclear-arms race was among matters discussed this morning as the Amendment Conference of the States Parties to the Treaty Banning Nuclear Weapon Tests in the Atmosphere, in Outer Space and under Water --.also called the partial test-ban Treaty -- continued its general debate. The Conference was convened at the initiative of States parties seeking to convert the 1963 Treaty into a comprehensive test ban.

Participants considered such issues as the relationship between testing and non-proliferation, the gap between nuclear- and non-nuclear-weapon States, the effectiveness of current verification technologies and the possible use of on-site inspections and seismological surveillance.

Views were also expressed on the difference between a phased or immediate approach to a comprehensive ban, the possibility of a moratorium as an interim measure, the relative importance of multilateral and bilateral efforts and the question of the continuing relevance of current nuclear doctrines.

Speakers at yesterday afternoon's meeting said a comprehensive ban would serve as a barrier to nuclear proliferation, prevent the development of new generations of nuclear weapons and thus facilitate an end to the arms race. Speakers welcomed recent agreements reached between the Soviet Union and the United States, particularly regarding verification techniques for monitoring compliance with the partial test ban. Several participants rejected the view that nuclear weapons served as a deterrent to war among the major Powers. Some expressed the view that the extensive resources used to maintain nuclear-testing programmes could be put to more constructive use.

The Treaty, which does not cover underground tests, was signed on 5 August 1963 by the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom and the United States, and entered into force on 10 October the same year. By 1 November 1990, there were 117 parties to the Treaty. Two nuclear-weapon States -- China and France -- are among those that have not acceded to it.

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